

# HISTORY HAPPENS HERE

## May is National Preservation Month

May is the third annual National Preservation Month, and Asheville and Buncombe County will mark the occasion with a slate of events and activities as diverse and interesting as the region itself. From the Smith McDowell House's History Alive Festival to the Montford Arts Festival to the Big Ivey Historical Society's dedication of a restored fire tower, the mild weather of May is the perfect time to get out of the house and take part in the celebration of our region's cultural heritage. Started by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the idea behind Preservation Month is to celebrate the country's diverse and irreplaceable heritage by participating in local events.

For Western North Carolina, preservation is a topical issue and one that is being kept in the forefront by residents witnessing the transformation of our rapidly growing region. Much has been done to preserve Buncombe County's heritage and historic properties, and in October of 2006, Asheville was designated a Preserve America Community by First Lady Laura Bush. The Preserve America initiative is a White House program to encourage and support community efforts for the preservation and enjoyment of America's priceless cultural and natural heritage.

Home to two National Landmarks -- the Biltmore Estate and the Thomas Wolfe Memorial -- Asheville has nearly 100 properties listed individually on the National Register of Historic Places. The city and county have a total of 45 local landmarks and 3 local historic districts. History does happen here. The city and county value regional heritage and many people have worked to preserve traditions, buildings, landscapes, rivers, views and places that embody our shared history. We are fortunate to live in a community that embraces its past. In May, this heritage will be celebrated in myriad ways including exhibits, public programs, tours, festivals, performances and more.

Several exhibitions will be on display during the month including the *2007 Haywood Community*

*College Graduate Exhibition* at the Grove Arcade ARTS & Heritage Gallery and *The Family Store, a History of Jewish Businesses in Downtown Asheville From 1880-1990*. Among the festivals taking place are the History Alive Festival at the Smith McDowell House Museum, the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Montford Music and Arts Festival and the Black Mountain Hiking Festival. The Swannanoa Valley Museum is hosting a multi-family reunion of families whose roots go back 100 years in the Valley while UNC-Asheville will present a digital preservation workshop. The Big Ivey Historical Society will dedicate the recently restored Little Snowball Mountain Fire Tower with a ceremony and ramp festival. On-going opportunities to learn about Western North Carolina's shared heritage include the Urban Trail, a self-guided tour of the Grove Arcade, Montford Auto Rickshaw Tours, Riverfront Bus Tours and more. A complete listing of activities celebrating Preservation Month is attached and can also be accessed at [www.asheville.gov](http://www.asheville.gov). Follow the links to Preservation Month.

It is easy to take history for granted when you live in Western North Carolina. History happens here and it is celebrated here as well. So if you have been meaning to visit the Thomas Wolfe Memorial or if you have a hankering to kick up your heels at the Farmer's Ball at Warren Wilson College, May is the month to do it. Get out and participate!

The celebration of Preservation Month is being coordinated by the Buncombe County Heritage Council, an association of public and private entities with an interest in promoting historic preservation, education and heritage tourism in Buncombe County. For additional information, call Leesa Sutton Brandon at 828-232-0835.

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